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Friday, 16 October 2009, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Le Luong Minh	(Viet Nam)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Koudougou
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. Araud
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Twenty-ninth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2009/472)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Expression of farewell to Sir John Sawers, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations

The President: I have been informed that our respected colleague Sir John Sawers, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, is today attending a meeting of the Security Council for the last time before he leaves for a new assignment. I want to take this opportunity to express to him, on behalf of the members of the Council, our appreciation of him both as a colleague and as a friend.

From the time Ambassador Sawers took up his present position in the summer of 2007, he has made a valuable contribution to the work of the Council. His vast diplomatic skill, demure manner and sense of collegiality have made him a highly effective and valued representative of his country. He will be remembered for many of his astute interventions and his willingness to rally the Council to consensus when it was most needed, as well as for his leadership of various segments of the Council's missions to Africa. In bidding Sir John a fond farewell, Council members and I wish him great success and fulfilment in his future endeavours. We are certain that he will keep an eye on the activities of the Council.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Twenty-ninth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2009/472)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Alan Doss, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Doss to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the twenty-ninth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is contained in document S/2009/472.

At this meeting, members of the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Alan Doss. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Doss (*spoke in French*): The report (S/2009/472) of the Secretary-General before the Security Council provides an assessment of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the activities of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). Overall, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) have made progress in their operations against foreign armed groups, and especially against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), which have been pushed out of most populated areas and now find themselves dispersed and weakened. The integration of Congolese armed groups is continuing. Displaced persons and refugees are in the process of returning to their homes. Nevertheless, serious risks and threats persist. We must not allow ourselves to become complacent.

The FDLR have been scattered, but they are not yet neutralized. Armed attacks are continuing in both Kivus and in Orientale province, where residual elements of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) are carrying out sporadic raids. The return of displaced persons and refugees after many years has led to ethnic tension and land disputes. Ongoing sexual violence poses an enormous challenge. The return of security has raised the hopes of the population, who now want to see a real peace dividend.

(*spoke in English*)

When I spoke to the Council a year ago, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was increasingly grave. We faced a security crisis of enormous dimensions following the resumption of hostilities with the Congrès national pour la défense du people (CNDP). A year on, there is now a real prospect that the conflicts that have for so long blighted the eastern Congo can be ended. There has been progress on a number of fronts.

FARDC operations in the Kivus and in Orientale province have significantly eroded the strike capacity and domination of the FDLR and the LRA. Since the beginning of the year, 1,126 FDLR combatants and 1,622 of their dependents have been repatriated by the MONUC team for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation. That is more than double the repatriation rate for the same period last year. An additional 11,383 Rwandan civilians, many of whom had been held hostage by the FDLR, have returned to Rwanda with the assistance of MONUC and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Two major figures wanted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for their involvement in the Rwanda genocide have been arrested and transferred to Arusha. I do not believe that would have happened without the military pressure that we have brought to bear on the FDLR.

Most of the internally displaced persons who had been regrouped in camps on the outskirts of Goma as a consequence of the earlier conflict with the CNDP have returned home, although there is still a very high number of displaced people in North and South Kivu who are waiting for further improvements in the security situation before they go back to their villages. Significantly, more than 2,000 children have been separated from armed groups and the FARDC since the beginning of the year, with the help of MONUC and UNICEF.

The integration of the CNDP and other Congolese armed groups is approaching completion. Over 120 political prisoners were recently released and returned to the East, with MONUC's assistance. The stabilization programme is now moving into areas freed from the control of armed groups, opening the way for the return of State authority.

Despite those positive developments, I do not want to imply that the troubles of eastern Congo are a thing of the past. The fast-track integration of up to 20,000 elements of former armed groups, some with very bad human rights records, into the FARDC has aggravated existing problems of indiscipline. Civilians in remote areas continue to suffer reprisals from the FDLR. There have been new population displacements and human rights violations. There is still an appallingly high level of violence against women. Large numbers of people remain displaced and difficult to access, especially during periods of combat. The implementation of the 23 March agreements with the armed groups has been slower than we would have wished.

Looking ahead, we see several issues that must be addressed if the momentum generated by the agreements reached between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in December 2008 and the 23 March agreements with the armed groups is to be maintained.

First, the areas cleared of FDLR presence by the FARDC must be fully secured to ensure continuing protection for the population and to allow internally displaced persons to return home.

Secondly, major operations against the remaining FDLR strongholds should be completed as soon as possible, with proper regard for the protection of civilians.

Thirdly, in areas that have been secured, the stabilization effort must be accelerated, giving priority to the control of mining sites to deprive armed elements of revenue, and backed up by the deployment of armed police and the reconstruction of roads and administrative infrastructure.

Fourthly, non-military initiatives designed to encourage defections and surrenders among the

remaining FDLR combatants must be further intensified.

Finally, but most importantly, the discipline of the FARDC and the national police, which itself is a vital dimension of protection, requires constant attention to signal and ensure that impunity will not be accepted.

How will MONUC help to address these concerns? The Council has directed us to focus our attention on protection. We have identified protection hotspots. Last year, we launched mobile operating bases so that we could respond more flexibly to the rapidly changing military environment. MONUC military is now present in more than 50 different locations throughout the Kivus and in five locations in areas LRA-affected in North-East Democratic Republic of the Congo, principally in Orientale province.

The Council is aware that we have created joint protection teams, which have deployed into security-sensitive areas to assist the military and local authorities to analyse, anticipate and respond to specific threats against civilians. More than 50 joint protection missions have been launched in North and South Kivu, and we have started expanding this practice to the remaining areas of instability and vulnerability in Orientale province. Deployment of these missions is guided by a rapid response and early warning cell that draws on information from a variety of sources, including civil society and surveillance networks established by the military at the provincial level. I believe we have circulated a map to the members of the Council showing the dispersion of all of those mission bases throughout the two Kivus.

We are also using these mechanisms to monitor the performance of individual FARDC battalions and, as necessary, asking the military leadership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to take corrective action when we see disciplinary problems. This will be the basis for any decision we may make on the necessity of withdrawing support if we see a blatant disregard for international humanitarian law.

President Kabila himself has now declared a zero-tolerance policy for acts of sexual and gender-based violence, and the Government is acting against looting, corruption and other undisciplined behaviour in the armed forces. The five commanders who were identified by the Security Council have all been removed from command and, we are assured, will be prosecuted. Two are already under arrest, two more have been put under house surveillance or arrest in Kinshasa, and the last one has absconded. The FARDC has established a military court for the Kivus, which has handed down more than 30 sentences to soldiers found guilty of serious crimes. High-level commanders have been relieved of their duties for misconduct.

The refurbishment of Ndolo military prison in Kinshasa is nearly complete and will enable us to transfer military prisoners — serious offenders — from the East to secure facilities in Kinshasa. MONUC itself is helping to establish prosecution support cells and joint investigation teams within the military to assist them to act more speedily in investigating and prosecuting serious crimes, including rape. Partner assistance in this initiative is critical.

I would like to underscore that we cannot make significant progress if we do not work on all of these areas simultaneously. We can arrest people and we can try them, but if they are not in secure facilities they can escape and return to do what they did before. So it is very important that we have this joint approach as we try to tackle the problem of impunity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

To underscore MONUC's full support for the President's zero-tolerance policy and to reinforce that policy, MONUC has told the Government that it will withdraw support from battalions that show a blatant disregard for international humanitarian law.

MONUC is the first mission in which the Force Commander has issued a specific directive on civilian protection to all contingents. Under that directive, MONUC Blue Helmets provide protection against attacks by the FDLR and other armed elements, patrol key routes to facilitate the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance, and indeed go well beyond those responsibilities. For example, on market days we provide armed escorts for thousands of villagers, in particular women, who wish to travel to market in safety, free of harassment and illegal taxation by armed groups.

All of these activities have been integrated into a comprehensive civilian protection strategy developed by MONUC, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the protection cluster.

Our protection efforts, however, are a daily exercise in managing scarce resources and, I must say,

making hard choices. The Council is well aware of the strain on MONUC's military and logistical assets. I therefore want to pay tribute to the contingents and civilian personnel who are working to project MONUC's presence into very demanding areas throughout the East.

In the past few weeks, the first elements of the additional 3,000 uniformed personnel authorized by the Council last year have begun to arrive in theatre and are being deployed exclusively in the East to further extend and reinforce our protection capacity. Another battalion is also being transferred from Kinshasa to Orientale province to backstop the operations against the LRA. With this transfer, only 500 United Nations troops will be left in the entire western area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Unfortunately, the limited helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft capacity is still a huge constraint on our ability to quickly deploy and sustain MONUC forces in places where they are most needed. This is compounded, I might add, by our lack of tactical intelligence. We have yet to receive any support in that area, even though it was authorized by the Council a year ago.

Despite the efforts made by the FARDC and MONUC to improve and extend protection, it is obviously not possible to protect everyone, everywhere, all of the time in the Kivus, an area the size of California with a population of almost 10 million. So inevitably the question arises: Should Kimia II be halted?

Some observers have suggested that Kimia II operations should be suspended in order to give the FARDC time to get its house in order and improve discipline. We believe, however, that reducing the pressure now would give the FDLR time to regroup and rearm. It would also send an ambiguous message to some elements of the FARDC who have in the past cooperated with the FDLR. Suspension would therefore undermine the FARDC's resolve and paradoxically, in our view, further weaken discipline by removing the immediate pressure for reform created by Kimia II. Rwanda might also see this as a step backwards from the rapprochement that has opened up an entirely new perspective for the Kivus since the agreement with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

A suspension would also make it more difficult for the Government to impose State authority and prevent the re-emergence of other armed groups that might well draw the conclusion that attacks against civilians will force the Government to give in to their demands. Above all, a suspension of operation Kimia II would be celebrated as a victory by the FDLR. It would strengthen the ties between the leadership abroad and the combatants on the ground, thus obviating years of efforts at sensitization aimed at weakening these links.

We do, however, agree that military pressure alone is not enough and should be part of a multifaceted approach to the FDLR problem that recognizes the need for enhanced measures to protect civilians and other action designed to encourage FDLR defections and the weakening of FDLR support outside of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Council will recall my earlier appeal for countries hosting FDLR leaders abroad to take legal action to neutralize their influence on the conflict. The Council's commitment and cooperation in this regard are particularly important. FDLR leaders abroad have sustained a propaganda campaign against operation Kimia II, discouraging rank-and-file combatants from surrendering. Additional pressure must be brought to bear on exiled leaders to change their attitude or sever their communications with combatants on the ground.

MONUC has proposed that the Congolese Government and host countries of FDLR leaders in exile explore the possibility of criminalizing the FDLR under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. There is overwhelming evidence of crimes in the Kivus, and if this initiative gained international support it would also serve as a powerful disincentive to those involved in illegal trading networks with the FDLR.

Allow me now to report briefly on the integration of Congolese armed groups into the national army. More and more remnant groups are joining this process. They have been motivated by a combination of military pressure and dialogue. Although the official integration process is over, the FARDC continues to receive and to integrate those who surrender. At the same time, the army hierarchy is endeavouring to improve the conditions of service for newly integrated soldiers, although the timely payment of salaries is still a major problem that needs to be resolved urgently. We find that when salaries are not paid on time, discipline deteriorates, looting begins and other kinds of violence

follow, especially violence against women. So it is absolutely essential that the problem of timely pay be resolved.

In the framework of the stabilization programme, barracks are being constructed for these troops, with the assistance of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. A MONUC training programme for newly integrated troops will start in January at two or three planned training centres, with the support of training specialists from the Tanzanian army, who will join MONUC as a formed contingent.

These activities are intended to consolidate military integration and improve the discipline and efficiency of the FARDC. They are the first steps towards army reform, which in itself is an important long-term project that will require substantial international support. The Conseil supérieur de la défense has endorsed an army reform plan that has been submitted to Parliament for review. The Minister of Defence will discuss its implementation with international partners once parliamentary approval has been obtained.

MONUC has worked with the mediation, led by Presidents Obasanjo and Mkapa, to follow up on the 23 March agreements. As I have already mentioned, we have assisted with the release of former CNDP prisoners. We are mobilizing resources for war-wounded and for a training programme for the integrated police units. We shall also continue to press for a solution to the territorial administration in areas where ex-CNDP cadres still retain control on the ground. We will work with all concerned to ensure that the commitment to the 23 March agreements does not falter.

Because of time constraints, I will not discuss a number of other areas of concern and activity of MONUC. Let me mention, however, the local elections. Despite assurances from the Government that the local elections will be held before the general elections currently planned or scheduled for mid-2011, the timetable and dates for those local elections have not yet been announced and may well be pushed back again until late 2010. Also, the necessary enabling legislation has yet to be adopted by the legislature. We have informed the Congolese authorities that when they are ready we will be ready, but obviously the initiative lies with them and not with us.

The report of the Secretary-General also mentions the dismissal of a large number of magistrates. There is concern regarding the establishment of mechanisms to ensure judicial independence and accountability, including the Conseil supérieur de la magistrature. Current tensions regarding the respective roles of the Conseil and the Ministry of Justice, and the paucity of budgetary resources, are impediments to progress in establishing an effective justice sector, which is a key pillar of security sector reform.

As grave as the problem is with regard to the courts, the situation of prisons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is even more critical. As the current level of national funding renders significant progress impossible, donor resources are urgently required to help us maintain the minimum humanitarian standards expected of a national prison system.

In closing, I want to make some observations, if I may be allowed, about MONUC's mandate, which will be reviewed by this Council at the end of the year. Resolution 1856 (2008) lists 41 tasks, which have given us considerable flexibility in a rapidly changing environment. However, it has also generated many demands and high expectations that perhaps need to be rationalized. The preparation of an integrated strategic framework, as requested by the Secretary-General's Policy Committee, provides us with an opportunity to reflect on how this might be done.

The framework, which is a joint undertaking of MONUC and the United Nations country team, will outline the key challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It will indicate how the United Nations might assist the country and respond in a cohesive manner, taking full account of the Government's own stated priorities and the directives of this Council as regards the focus and deployment of MONUC's resources.

The integrated strategic framework builds on other initiatives developed by the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, notably the United Nations strategy to combat sexual violence, the strategy on protection of civilians, the stabilization programme for the East, and the multidimensional approach to dealing with the FDLR. The framework will consider challenges that do not fall directly under the mandate of MONUC but are of direct concern to the wider United Nations system. Nevertheless, we

anticipate that the strategic framework will highlight issues that should be part of the MONUC mandate review. These will include the progress of the peace process, security sector reform, protection and the rule of law, conflict prevention and resolution, stabilization in the East and the democratic process and elections.

We shall also consider the possible structural arrangements required to implement such a strategic framework. In line with the Security Council's directives, MONUC has already deployed 95 per cent of the Mission's military resources to the East and, outside of the headquarters establishment, almost 90 per cent of the international civilian staff, drawn from all substantive sections, are also in eastern areas. We have conducted a review of ongoing United Nations operations in the western provinces and identified areas of responsibility that could be progressively transferred to the United Nations country team with minimal continued support from MONUC.

In October 2008, the Council approved a surge capacity for MONUC, which is under deployment. Assuming that the surge is successful and that major military operations against foreign armed groups can be concluded in 2010, MONUC could then begin a phased troop drawdown at a pace consonant with the security situation on the ground. Should the Council so wish, this would permit the United Nations to reallocate, within a declining overall budget, additional resources to an intensified programme of security sector reform and, more broadly, to the strengthening of the rule of law as a prelude to the eventual departure of the United Nations peacekeeping presence.

In the next report of the Secretary-General to the Council, we shall present the key elements of the integrated strategic framework as a contribution to the Council's review of MONUC's mandate and the possible reconfiguration of the Mission structure.

In all of the activities, I want to add, MONUC works closely with Congolese authorities at the national and provincial levels. We also work with the special envoys of the Secretary-General, the African Union, the European Union and representatives of individual Member States. We value in particular the contribution of the European Union security sector reform and police missions to security sector reform, as well as the support of several Member States to the United Nations Security and Stabilization Support Strategy for the East.

(*spoke in French*)

In November, MONUC will have been present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for 10 years. Beginning as a small observer mission, it grew to become the largest United Nations mission in the world. Over the course of the decade, it has overseen the ceasefire and the withdrawal of foreign troops, stabilized the security situation, accompanied the inter-Congolese dialogue and the transfer and demobilization of armed groups in Kivu and elsewhere, facilitated the first free and transparent elections in 40 years, and helped the Government to manage the crisis in the Kivus and to combat armed forces.

We are proud to have worked with the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its peace process, which has seen many reversals and developments, but certain essential objectives set out in the Sun City Agreement and that underpin MONUC's presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remain to be achieved. These include the training of a professional republican army, the restoration of State authority throughout the national territory, reconciliation and the effective reconstruction of the country. I believe that the simultaneous tasks of stabilization and pacification must continue, with the support of MONUC and the material and diplomatic support of the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Doss for his briefing.

I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I wish to reassure you, Sir, that I will be brief. At the outset I would like to express my pleasure at seeing you, Sir, preside over the Council during this month of October. I also take the opportunity to associate myself with the unanimous congratulations addressed to the United States delegation for last month's presidency. Finally, I note the importance of the Secretary-General's twenty-ninth report on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) (S/2009/472) and thank him. I also welcome the presentation and briefing just made by his Special Representative.

I will limit my comments to two aspects of importance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The first is MONUC.

For all things, there is a beginning and there is an end. We human beings are born and we die. That is God's will and nature's law, but the important thing is to succeed in life. It is the duty of MONUC to succeed in Congo. Our future generations must remember this as having been, at a specific moment in history, the largest United Nations peacekeeping operation, which by its deployment made it possible to end the first African world war and which successfully oversaw a lengthy disengagement process, managed a difficult political transition, assisted in organizing free and democratic elections and, finally, laid the foundations for renewal of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That means that to be a complete success, it is imperative that MONUC succeed in its exit.

We are thankful that the international community has finally deigned — even one year late — to follow through on the request of the Secretary-General for a temporary increase in the number of MONUC military and police unit personnel. This was important in order to strengthen MONUC's capacity to truly protect the Congolese civilian population and for MONUC to commit itself more firmly than it has to date, alongside the Congolese army, in the fight against the residual armed groups that still abound in the eastern part of my country. It is necessary to significantly reduce, even annihilate, the capacity of those armed groups to harm in order to make peace a reality. Restoring peace, which the people of Congo yearn for, will promote healthy, calm consideration of the future of the United Nations presence in the Congo.

Here I wish to be clear. The Congolese people do not wish for a hasty withdrawal of MONUC. At the same time, the Congolese people do not want MONUC to remain forever. It thus behooves my country to take with the Council the multidimensional strategic decisions — including military and non-military measures — aimed, inter alia, at enabling the Congolese Government to fully take on and ensure security, State authority throughout the national territory, good governance, strengthening the rule of law and the economic development of the country.

In order to do this we must work together, both at Headquarters and in the field, to define the parameters for drawing up not only a timetable for the disengagement of United Nations troops in parallel with the setting up of the Congolese army, but also, more generally, a road map which would sanction the transition from a peacekeeping operation to a peacebuilding operation, an operation to bolster stability in an area which could transcend Congo's borders. On that subject, I have already exchanged letters with the Secretariat on setting up a United Nations office for Central Africa. Once that has been established, simple logic would dictate that this office be located in the country which symbolizes Central Africa and whose capital is Kinshasa.

My second point is sexual violence, a topic I hold close to my heart. On 10 January 2000, I addressed the Security Council as the embassy counselor I was then on the topic of the impact of AIDS on peace and security in Africa. (S/PV.4087 (Resumption 1)). I seized that opportunity to draw the Council's attention to the inhuman and degrading treatment and violence suffered by Congolese heads of households — mainly men who were victims of the war. I also drew the attention of the international community to the very heavy toll paid by women, children and especially young girls in the eastern provinces, victims of systematic rape by the occupiers, and highlighted the use of seropositive soldiers. Still today, the prevalence rate of AIDS in Orientale province and in North and South Kivu is four times the national average.

I remain convinced that if at that time the Council had deigned to take on its responsibility, this virus of sexual violence that the Democratic Republic of the Congo inherited would not have spread. It would not have contaminated on such a scale the various armed groups, Congolese armed forces and peacekeeping contingents. I feel no pride, I feel no honour to find myself 10 years later before the Council addressing virtually the same issue and continuing to report on these massive violations of human rights, especially violence against women and children.

With the passage of time, the vast majority of those who committed atrocities at the beginning of hostilities will slip through the net of justice. However, their bosses and masterminds are well known. It is important that those soldiers and others convicted of crimes of sexual violence be brought to justice in their respective States. In fact, one could come up with and develop a mechanism by which international justice could be correctly rendered.

Turning to the actions of my Government, all Council members heard the head of my delegation affirm, during the general debate in the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, that

> "The sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls in the eastern part of Democratic Republic of the Congo is, in our view, the most shameful and gravest crime witnessed by humankind in the twenty-first century." (see *A/64/PV.11*)

The Minister for Foreign Affairs assured Member States of the firm resolve of His Excellency President Joseph Kabila Kabange to put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of these heinous acts. He informed Member States that a number of officers of the Congolese armed forces and a good many civilians who had committed such hateful crimes have been brought before the national courts.

The international community represented in the Congo should also show itself above reproach, as sometimes its behaviour leaves something to be desired. By way of example, I can cite the umpteenth case of a sexual offence committed by Blue Helmets, which occurred during the night of 31 July/1 August at N'Djili International Airport. While all the parties involved do not deny the commission of an act that I consider reprehensible, the MONUC spokesperson deemed it correct to declare, with regard to the complaint lodged by an 18-year-old woman of gang rape that night, that there was insufficient evidence to continue the investigation.

If the decision not to press charges had come from Congolese justice I would not have commented. But as a Congolese citizen, I believe that I have the right to know how that conclusion was reached. If it was a United Nations decision, most likely the result of some arrangement, that would be regrettable and the Security Council should have taken the matter up. In this specific case, whether gang rape occurred or not, because they were dealing with a presumed streetwalker, did these United Nations Blue Helmets have the right to turn N'Djili International Airport into a sex pad, without any reprimand or sanction? This is shocking. I ask, what happened to the zero-tolerance policy declared in 2005?

On the matter of sexual violence, it is important that all of us together send the right message. Maybe the creation of the post of special representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in armed conflict will be a sufficient response. However, to be frank and candid, I must say that people would find it difficult to understand if the post were not filled by a woman, especially a woman from a region affected by the plague of sexual violence.

Finally, I would be remiss if, after what was said by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Sir John Sawers — whose departure I regret — I failed to recognize the efforts of all those women and men who have deeply felt the unspeakable suffering and burdens of Congolese women. To the list of those mentioned on 30 September by the British Permanent Representative (see S/PV.6195), I should like to add the diplomats of the United States Mission to the United Nations and especially the informal group United for Women of All Nations, whose activities have been decisive in ensuring that the plight of Congolese women is not forgotten.

The President: There are no further speakers on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.